DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 299 837 FL 017 661

AUTHOR Rado, Marta
TITLE Hearer Perspective on Interlanguage.
PUB DATE 86
NOTE 35p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Australian Association for Research in Education (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, 1986).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Aural Learning; *Bilingualism; Comparative Analysis; English (Second Language); *Error Analysis (Language); Foreign Countries; Interlanguage; *Language Acquisition; *Language Processing; Listening Comprehension; Native Speakers; Second Language Learning; Young Children
IDENTIFIERS Australia; *Caregiver Speech; Nonnative Speakers

ABSTRACT

Two studies investigated: (1) aspects of the language of native-English-speaking (ES) and non-native-English-speaking (NES) parents of children learning English and (2) the demands made on the listening of young children learning English from native-speaking parents and non-native-speaking parents. Information in the parent study was drawn from previous research. Subjects in the second study were selected 5- and 6-year-old children matched for sex, school achievement, and parent language background. Results of the first study indicate that 66% of the clauses uttered by NES parents were faulty compared with 11% of those uttered by ES parents, and NES parents made more errors in their repairs. In the second study, a linguistic awareness test was administered to 40 children. The ES-parent children performed as well as or better than the NES-parent children on all awareness measures. It is concluded from the two studies that NES parents impose a very heavy listening burden on their children and are not as hearer-oriented as the ES parents, suggesting that bilingualism does not necessarily enhance language awareness. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED299837

HEARER PERSPECTIVE ON INTERLANGUAGE

Marta Rado

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. Rado

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

FL 017661

Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education Annual Conference, University of Melbourne, 1986.

HEARER PERSPECTIVE ON INTERLANGUAGE

Marta Rado

School of Education

La Trobe University

Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education Annual Conference, University of Melbourne, 1986.

ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the demands "interlanguage" or non-standard second language learner English makes on the hearer. This is of interest because a significant number of school-age children with a non-English speaking background receive such language from their parents at least some of the time. The processing task this implies is compared with the task facing children with parents who are mother-tongue speakers of English. This is done by taking some formal and pragmatic aspects of language into account. The implications of findings for language planners, educators and parents are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years bilingual children have received much attention from teachers, researchers and linguists. This statement immediately raises the question how the term 'bilingual' is to be interpreted. For the purposes of this discussion it will be understood that a bilingual is an individual who can function in at least two different language environments (Rado, 1984: 60). This definition focuses on listening comprehension and not on speaking and literacy skills. It can therefore be applied to a significant number of children in Australia with a non-English-speaking background. These are the children whose language situation is the topic of this paper particularly with respect to English. This can be justified on the grounds that instruction in Australian schools is predominantly carried out through the medium of English which, in turn, affects school achievement, career prospects and eventually quality of life. However, findings to be presented have implications for language learning per se and hence for learning languages other than English (LOTE).

The Study

The data for this paper have been drawn from a data bank established in collaboration with Dr. Lois Foster as the result of a continuing study of the language environment of primary school age children with non-English and English-speaking backgrounds (NESB and ESB). The data are being subjected to a range of linguistic analyses which include the formal and pragmatic aspects of language (see Rado and Foster, 1985a, 1985b, 1986a, 1986b and

1986c forthcoming). This paper pays particular attention to the children as hearers and to their language awareness.

The continuing study involves the collection of language samples from selected year 5 and 6 NESB and ESB children matched for sex and school achievement and their parents. The NES children come from family backgrounds where Greek, Italian, Macedonian, Spanish, Turkish and Vietnamese are spoken. The government and Catholic schools the children attended are situated in the Northern and Western suburbs of Melbourne. Modes of data collection include face-to-face interviewing of participants and the application of specifically designed materials to elicit connected discourse from children and to test their language awareness. The subjects for this paper are 12 pairs of students and their parents in 1985 and 8 pairs and parents in 1986, that is 80 participants in total.

The paper consists of two parts. Part one reports previous findings on some selected aspects of the parents' language discussed from a hearer perspective. Part two discusses the linguistic awareness of the two groups of children with ostensibly different language experiences in the home.

PART ONE: NESB AND ESB PARENT LANGUAGE

Because intensive analyses are so time consuming only the protocols of eight pairs of parents, sixteen in total have been studied for the marking of obligatory and optional elements in language. The term obligatory marking refers to all the semantico-grammatical signals that must

be present in a well formed string of words in contrast to those elements that are avoidable, in other words where the speaker has a choice in marking. From the point of view of the hearer, both markings are important because of the role they play in comprehension. If the message is impaired because obligatory markings are missing or distorted, as in the 'interlanguage' of the second language learner, the hearer must repair the message in order to understand it. This statement is based on the assumption that assigning meaning to an utterance is based on the hearer's linguistic and pragmatic knowledge (For example see Carroll, 1972 and Bever, 1972). Impaired messages can often be interpreted on the basis of the wider context or linguistic redundancy but the processing task is more difficult and the interpretation probable rather than certain. Whereas obligatory marking is a prerequisite for easy comprehension, optional marking is a bonus for the hearer as it supplies explicit information and/or enriches the message. (See Rado and Foster, 1986b).

The NES parents in this sample were interlanguage speakers who addressed their children in English some of the time. A comparison of the characteristic features of their language with those of the ES parents' should shed light on the difficulties this entails for their children as hearers. Undoubtedly mother tongue speakers also make errors due to some temporary difficulty such as inattention or fatigue, but they are usually not sufficiently frequent to seriously impede communication. The unit chosen for analysis was the clause as this can be regarded as the primary perception unit in speech processing (see Bever, 1972: 104).

The language material analysed was selected by first establishing a sample fraction for clauses and then systematically sampling 50 clauses uniformly across the sample.

Results and Discussion

Obligatory Marking

On a global assessment measure taking selected grammatical, semantic and pragmatic features into account it was found that two-thirds (66 per cent) of the clauses uttered by the NES parents were faulty compared with one-tenth (11 per cent) of those of the ES parents. In addition to this dramatic difference there was also a difference in the complexity of the repair task errors entailed. There were only two ES parent clauses where the manner of repair was in doubt. In contrast one-fifth of the NES parent clauses could have been repaired in various ways or were impossible to repair. (See Tables 1 and 2)

Table 1

NES and ES Parent Faulty Clauses

Clauses n = 400

Parents	Faulty Clauses		
	f	%	Average
NES	264	66	33
ES	45	11	6

Table 2

NES Message Restoration

Clauses n = 400			Faulty clauses n = 264		
Restoration	%			%	
Single	46		70		
Multiple	8)		12)		
		20			30
Impossible	12)		18)		

If it can be assumed that impairment in obligatory marking increases the processing load for the hearer, perhaps it can be also assumed that choice and uncertainty in repair will further increase this load. Moreover, it is often impossible to interpret such clauses accurately.

One area of impairment that was considered to merit special investigation was the verb group (VG) because of its centrality in the clause (for example see Chafe, 1970 and Lyons, 1977).

Table 3

Rank Order of Selected Verb Group Errors
n = Faulty clause

NES Parents n = 264			ES Parents n = 45		
	f	%		f	%
Tense	70	27	Be	8	18
Omission	56	21	Have got	8	18
Be	40	15	Omission	3	7
Negative)	14	5	Tense	2	4
Lexical)	14	5	Modal	2	4
Modal	10	4	Negative)	0	0
Have got	8	3	Lexical)	0	0
Total ...	212	80	Total	23	51

Table 3 indicates that a much greater proportion of NES parent faulty clauses contained an impaired verb group, and in particular was deficient in tense marking. Because spatio-temporal reference is an essential part of the communication system (see Lyons, 1977), the non-marking of temporal reference must constitute a serious impediment for the hearer.

Other observed errors in obligatory marking are incorrect word order, pluralisation, and prepositions.

Table 4

Occurrence of Selected Morphosyntactic and Discourse Features

n = Clause	NES Parent n = 400	
	f	%
Incorrect word order	21	5
Pluralisation		
Correct	56	14
Incorrect	10	2
Total	66	16
Prepositions		
Correct	63	16
Incorrect	24	6
Total	87	22

Table 4 indicates that the error rate in these obligatory areas was relatively small and consequently may not constitute a major source of difficulty.

Omission

Generally omissions tend to occur in interlanguage in every part of a clause. Here we are discussing the verb group only and, within that group, specifically the lexical verb and the auxiliaries.

Lexical verb omissions can lead to various interpretations. Compare "Sometimes help mother too but if she have a bit of break always ___ television." The omitted verb is obviously 'watches'. No other verb comes immediately to mind.

In the next example, several options present themselves for clause completion. "The one thing more brains ___ the clever is". Possible completions include the following: "...the more brains she has..."; "...the more her brain is developed..."; and the most probable in the context "...the more she learns..."; which amount to a total rephrasing of the clause.

Because of the centrality of the verb in the clause, its meaning must be fully restored if effective communication is to take place. Undoubtedly such restoration is not usually part of the hearer's task and constitutes another instance of overloading and at times meaning impairment in the form of uncertainty or even incomprehension.

Lexical Confusion: Wrong Verb Choice

Lexical confusion, namely the wrong choice of a word, in this case the lexical verb, can lead to vagueness in comprehension as several modes of restoration might offer themselves. Some of these might involve additions to the clause rather than substitution with a verb that uniquely fits the

context. The analysis of the NES parent protocols revealed that verb meaning restoration was often not straightforward in that a choice had to be made among several likely candidates. Further restoration often involved changes in syntax.

In the following clause the verb can be uniquely restored.

Example:

Deviant clause: "They learn each other".

Restored clause: "They teach each other".

However, clause restoration is not always clear-cut. Often there is more than one possible replacement.

Example:

Deviant clause: "Here can do better life".

Restored optional clauses: (a) "Here I can have a better life".

(b) "Here I can lead a better life".

The difference in meaning is not significant. This, however, is not always the case.

Example:

Deviant clause: "They can more languages the better for them".

Optional restorations: (a) "If they know more languages the better for them".

(b) "If they can learn more languages the better for them".

These two clauses are similar in meaning but they are not identical. So there is some possibility of incorrect interpretation leading to misunderstanding. The seriousness of the misunderstanding of the communicative act will depend on the context of the situation.

In some instances the range of possible modes of restoration is considerable.

Example:

Deviant clause: "The school is to learn the people".

Possible restored clauses: (a) "The school is here to teach people"

(b) "The school should teach people".

(c) "The school serves to teach people".

(d) "The function of the school is to teach people".

The list is not exhaustive.

Sometimes repair is impossible or a pure guess.

Example:

Deviant clause in answer to a question about liking Italian festivities:

"Yes, well I get quite all right".

Whether the speaker meant 'like' or 'keep' or some other verb cannot be uniquely determined.

Optional Marking

In addition to obligatory marking it may be profitable to look also at optional marking, namely the degree of support the speaker gives to the hearer thereby lightening the latter's processing task. The data base in this instance are the full answers given to 17 questions by the parents. Again, the unit chosen for analysis was the clause.

Verbal Output

The volume of responses, as can be seen in Table 5 varies considerably across the two groups. One can speculate that this is due to language competence rather than attributing greater talkativeness to native speakers of English.

Table 5

Number of Clauses

	f	Average
NES Parent	1098	173
ES Parent	3150	394

Connectives

Connectives can serve as a good example for optional language elements because often their absence does not necessarily constitute a mistake. English has a variety of linguistic means for marking the boundary and filling gaps between clauses and for indicating the nature of their grammatical, semantic or discourse relationship. Although their absence may not create difficulties, their presence can serve the hearer well by making relations between events explicit and by providing extra processing time.

Table 6

	NES Parent	ES Parent
Clauses	1098	3150
	%	%
Connectives	31	41
Connective clusters	25	42

Table 6 shows that the NES parents used connectives less frequently. If one considers connectives in speech as place holders indicating to the children that a connection should be made between clauses, they may well direct non-conscious attention to these signals. This could be useful given the importance logical conjunctions play in expository prose, a discourse genre many NESB children find difficult to handle.

Fillers and Routines

Fillers and routines are of particular interest because they are totally optional. At times they could even be judged to be superfluous. Fillers have no semantic role, in other words they are meaningless. Their sole function is to increase planning/processing time for conversational partners. To put it another way, they reduce message density both structurally and semantically. They favour both hearers and speakers. As can be seen in Table 7, NES parents used relatively few fillers thereby did not actively contribute to a reduction of the processing load.

Table 7

	NES	ES
	Parent	Parent
Clauses	1098	3150
	%	%
Filler	7	12
Routine	11	18
Repetition	15	3
False start	2	2

Routines are partly or wholly prefabricated chunks that don't need analysis. They can be used as if they were big words. So they can be simply memorised. According to Peters (1983) they facilitate native like fluency, lighten the processing task and so allow the speaker to focus on the social rather than the linguistic aspect of the interaction.

The lesser use of routines by NES parents compared with ES parents (see Table 7) indicates that they are less skilled in English in guiding their hearers' attention to some of the interpersonal dimensions of their message. This is another instance where NES parents are less able to provide additional hearer support.

False Start/Repetition

Other aspects of language that have no semantic role to play are false starts and repetitions. Repetitions may play a similar role to fillers or they may function as reinforcers, requests for clarification and comprehension checks. These latter roles could justify the hypothesis that they are rooted in speaker insecurity or lack of experience as revealed by young children's verbal games. Consequently it should not be surprising

that NES parents are frequent users of repetitions compared with ES parents. Apparently this is the way they increase planning time rather than by using the other available devices.

False starts occurred relatively rarely across the four groups. They are often associated with self correction and thereby reveal linguistic awareness as self-correction involves the deliberate manipulation of language which in turn plays a role in handling literacy skills. Although false starts can be informative for the linguist, they are disruptive for the conversational partner and so play a negative role in language processing. The sporadic occurrence of false starts in the protocols means that this was not a feature that impeded communication.

Semi-optional/Avoidable Elements

Modal auxiliaries

There are some elements of which it can be said that they occupy an intermediate position in language between obligatory and optional marking in that as a rule they can be replaced by optional structures.

Modal auxiliaries belong to this category. They introduce an additional dimension into language. In this case the choice is not so much whether a modal will be used, but rather which one. Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 62-68) list 15 modal auxiliaries. Almost all of these have more than one meaning and share some meanings with each other (e.g. 'can' and 'may' to give permission).

Modal auxiliaries are important in that they indicate the scale of likelihood ranging from certainty to improbability and so play an important

role in distinguishing fact from non-fact (Leech and Svartvik, 1975: 124-155). Besides referring to reality and belief they also express emotions and attitudes. In this way they play a role in emotive emphasis, in influencing people, and in polite communication.

Table 8

Modal Auxiliaries

	NES Parent	ES Parent
Clauses	1098	3150
	%	%
Modal	4	7

In relative term ES parents used almost twice as many modals as NES parents. This is of import in view of the social significance of modals. Their absence could be interpreted as a sign of a more limited repetoire which may not fully reflect the social and intellectual content the parents intended to convey.

To sum up, it can be said that the processing load of the NESB children when addressed by their parents in English was excessive because of the type of interlanguage used by the parents.

PART TWO: LANGUAGE AWARENESS

The phenomenon of language awareness in children has in recent years attracted the attention of developmental psychologists, linguists and educationalists. This is not surprising because of the link between levels of cognitive functioning and language awareness, the role language awareness plays in early language acquisition and later in learning to read. It can be said -

> At a general level, language awareness may be characterized as the ability to reflect upon the structure and functions of language, as opposed to simply using it to comprehend and produce sentences.
>
> (Grieve et al., 1980: 5)

Language awareness manifests itself in a range of activities. These include (see Grieve et al., 1980: 9-12)

- making judgments about the form, complexity and appropriateness of language. For example, pre-school children can adjust the complexity of their speech to the age, role, status and competence of their conversational partners (Bates, 1976 and Shatz and Gelman, 1973).

- applying and commenting upon the rules of language. For example, attaching the regular past tense suffix /-ed/ to irregular verbs such as 'eated'.

- correcting oneself or others. For example, answering questions such as 'How would you make this sentence better? "The school is to learn the people."'

- supplying interpretations. For example answering questions such as 'What do I mean when I say "The chickens are ready to eat"?'

- segmenting units of language. For example, segmenting sentences into words, words into sounds.

- practising and playing with language. For example, posing riddles.

- inquiring about language. For example, asking what unknown words mean, inquiring about correctness.

In sum, language awareness is the ability to pay attention to language in various ways. This must not be confused with the ability of stating some of the grammatical rules of a language. Bialystok who is concerned with second language learning characterises language awareness as 'explicit' knowledge which he contrasts with 'implicit' or non-conscious knowledge. She explains

> ... implicit knowledge is 'descriptive' in that the structure of the knowledge is not apparent apart from its application; explicit knowledge is 'explanatory' in that its logical basis is understood independently of its application.

Bialystok adds that

> It is important to clarify the relationship between 'explicit' knowledge and what might be called 'articulated' knowledge. While explicit knowledge may permit the learner to formulate verbal rules, explicit knowledge is not necessarily represented

> to the learner as a set of rules. That is, there is no reason to believe that our understanding of linguistic structure is isomorphic to the linguist's description of the structure (1981: 34-35).

Clearly explicit knowledge is another term for language awareness. The latter is preferable because more widely used. What is important about this ability from the point of view of learning/teaching is that one's knowledge is transferable to other contexts and that one can justify judgments and choices with certainty. Its beneficial effects are highly significant for school children and speakers generally, particularly in a literate society.

> When automatic access to explicit linguistic knowledge is possible, the result is highly skilled linguistic performance. This special fluency with the structure of language apart from its conversational use is required for language tasks containing a high literacy or academic component. It may be that literacy itself requires that large portion of our linguistic knowledge is represented in this way (Bialystok, 1981: 37).

Tunmer and Bowey (1980: 86) ascribe a significant role to language or metalinguistic awareness in the theory of reading acquisition. They suggest four categories of awareness and hypothesise a sequential ordering of their relative importance as the child progresses from a beginning to a skilled reader. The order is word awareness, phonological awareness and pragmatic awareness.

It can be assumed that children in middle school have developed a degree of language awareness. The question is whether there is any difference between children with a monolingual English-speaking background and children who are in a bilingual situation. Of particular interest is the fact that the English the bilingual children are exposed to some of the

time is an interlanguage. There is some research evidence that bilingual pre-school children are more advanced with respect to language awareness than their monolingual peers (Slobin, 1978). This advantage seems to carry over into middle school (Ben-Zeev, 1977). But what we don't know is whether such an advantage holds for children interacting with an impaired language. This paper attempts to give some preliminary insights.

Results and Discussion

As mentioned earlier, a linguistic awareness test was administered to 24 children (12 NESB and 12 ESB) and 16 children (8 NESB and 8 ESB) in 1985 and 1986 respectively. The tests were only partially identical. This was done so that the range of abilities tested could be extended. Where items were repeated results are reported for the total number of 20 in each group. In some instances language activities were sub-categorised and the children were asked to perform several tasks, in others only one task was set.

Phonological Awareness (Segmenting Units of Language and Applying the Rules of Language)

Every language has phonological rules, in other words pronunciation is rule governed. These rules tell us how to pronounce the same item in different contexts. An example of a phonological rule in English is

> Delete a /g/ when it occurs before a final nasal consonant
> (Fromkin and Rodman, 1978: 120).

Fromkin and Rodman state

> There are many cases where the English spelling represents the more abstract phonemic representation of words. This does not present problems for anyone who knows the grammar of English, since part of the grammar includes those phonological rules which relate phonemic representations to phonetic pronunciation. The spelling in these cases may actually be more efficient, as

> it represents more directly the fact that speakers store words phonemically in their mental dictionaries (1978: 119).

The intention was to probe and compare the children's ability to relate the segmental structure of the spoken word to the orthographic components of the written word and to apply the phonological rules of pronunciation. Accordingly the children were given a list of pairs of words some of which were already in their lexicon (e.g. sign-signature, bomb-bombard), others they would not have heard or seen before (e.g. paradigm-paradigmatic). The children were also asked to identify the first and last sound of some words where the spelling can be misleading (e.g. phone).

In 1985 the ESB children outstripped their NESB peers. In reading aloud the list of words the NESB children pronounced 52 per cent correctly compared with 63 per cent of the ES. The difference in favour of the ESB children was even greater when measuring the ability to segment words into letters and in separating the name of letters from the sounds they stand for in some contexts (NESB 58 per cent correct versus ESB 81 per cent).

Formal Awareness (Judging, Correcting and Applying the Rules of Language).

The concept of word and clause play an important role in language processing. The ability to handle these concepts varied with the tasks set. In some instances they were more apparent in the productive than in the receptive skills. Both groups in both years had a productive mastery of these concepts in that they could all say one word and a complete sentence on request. On the other hand identification of these units caused some difficulty. About half (55 per cent) of the NESB children and four-fifth (80 per cent) of the ESB children on a combined 1985-6 score could count the words in a sentence correctly.

Obligatory Marking

The children's awareness of obligatory marking was tested by means of the verb phrase. This choice was influenced by the central role the verb plays in a clause and by the fact that data were available on parents' errors in this aspect of grammar.

In 1985 the task was a simple recognition exercise of the correct form of an irregular verb given in a multiple choice format. All ESB children completed this task successfully compared to 83 per cent of the NESB children. In 1986 the task was extended to include the negative, the copula 'be' and concord, all verb group errors. The children were asked to actively correct a set of faulty clauses chosen from parent protocols. Some of the children would have been exposed to the errors these featured. Both groups responded without hestitation repeating the clause in its correct form with an equal 88 per cent success rate. The errors some did not notice or could not correct were the overgeneralised past tense form ('overtaked') and the pre-posed negative ('I no can do that'.)

Semantic Awareness (Supplying interpretations)

There is some evidence in the research literature (see Cummins and Gulutsan, 1974) that bilingualism results in greater cognitive flexibility manifested, for example, in the realisation that words are arbitrary labels. Yu and Bain explain

> (Bilingualism encourages) the early recognition that a name can be 'interchangeable', whereas meaning is an inherent, abstract and stable quality of a particular thing. From this experience the child acquires the rudiments of differentiation and abstraction, the essential elements in later higher cognitive functioning (1985: 86).

The test on the interchangeability of word meaning which involved the manipulation and interpretation of arbitrarily assigned word meanings was modelled on Ben-Zeev (1977). The results did not markedly differentiate between the two groups of children. In fact, the ESB children performed marginally better (NESB 70 per cent correct on an aggregate score of six tasks versus ESB 74 per cent). Whereas a significant majority of the 1985 groups were aware of the arbitrary assignation of meanings to words only a smaller proportion could handle polysemy. They found it difficult to assign more than one meaning to the same sound sequence. Once again the ESB children slightly outstripped their NESB peers (NESB 63 per cent versus ESB 68 per cent). The ability to give alternative interpretations depended on the context. The children also found it difficult to produce a polysemous word, some did not even try. Such a negative response was rare and only occurred in association with one other task.

Communicative Awareness

(A. Supplying interpretations)

Communicative awareness in this context refers to the ability to use one's linguistic and pragmatic knowledge in the interpretation of impaired utterances. To test this ability the children were presented with three brief extracts of escalating impairment from the parent protocols, and asked to clarify their meaning. It is perhaps significant to note that the NESB children were less hesitant to attempt the task and more likely to complete it successfully (see Table 9).

Table 9

Interpreting Sequences of Ungrammatical Utterances

n = 24

	NESB Children Score	ESB Children Score
Sequence A	7	6
Sequence B	7	6
Sequence C	4	2
Total	18	14

A related task was the repair of a sentence in more than one way. Except for one ESB child all the children gave an interpretation. The difference between the groups was the number of interpretations given. Table 10 shows the pattern of responses of the 16 children, 8 in each group. It appears that one ESB child outstripped the others in flexibility of approach to the task in that he/she saw more possibilities of repair.

Table 10

Optional Interpretations

	NESB Group score	ESB Group score
No response	0	0
1 option	5	3
2 options	4	4
3 options	3	3
4 options	0	4
Total alternatives	12	14

Communicative Awareness

(B. Making Judgements about the Appropriateness of Language)

Style variation

The success of conversations according to Grice (1975: 45-46) is achieved through a probably universally valid 'Co-operative Principle' which is embodied in a set of maxims. These have been summarised by Grice as

1. Quantity (Make your contribution no more or less informative as required)
2. Quality (Try to make your contribution one that is true)
3. Relation (Be relevant)
4. Manner (Be clear, be brief).

Grice's maxims need to be supplemented by another prerequisite for successful communication, namely that of politeness governed by the degree of formality of the situation and the need to maintain 'face'. Face is the acceptable image or self-concept individuals strive to project and is linked to the need of maintaining freedom of action and freedom from imposition (see Goffman, 1969 and Brown and Levinson, 1978). These requirements together with status/role relationships (see Brown and Gilman, 1970) influence the formality of the style adopted by conversational partners which range from the most informal or direct to the most formal or indirect. It may be useful to observe that greater formality can be expected to be associated with greater grammatical complexity. Accordingly one aspect of language development in the acquisition of a repertoire of speech styles and how to fit style to situation.

Since some research data are available on the various forms directives may take (see Leech and Svartvik, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; and Leech, 1980) in 1986, the children were asked to rank a set of directives in order from lesser to greater formality. the children's rank order was compared with the order established by the linguistic literature. According to the pattern shown in Table 11, children do make distinctions in directives following the principle that the less direct and the less binding such as the question form and the modals 'would' or 'could' are the most

polite because the easiest to refuse (Ervin-Tripp, 1976). The table shows the number of judgements for each directive which conformed to the pre-established rank order. The ESB children seem more sensitive to the two extremes of the scale than the NESB. The middle range is less well judged by either group.

Table 11

Choice of Directives

Rank order of formality	NESB Child	ESB Child
	f	f
Directive 1	4	8
" 2	3	8
" 3	3	5
" 4	2	3
" 5	1	3
" 6	6	7
Total of congruent choices	19	34

Among the various devices used in English to make a distinction between degrees of formality or politeness is ellipsis or the legitimate omission of clause constituents (see Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973; Shopen, 1973; Morgan, 1973 and Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1972). Morgan holds that the speaker's ability to produce and interpret fragments (ellipted clauses) is a matter of the same linguistic competence that enables them to deal with full sentences (pp. 720-21).

The children were asked to choose between an ellipted and non-ellipted response when answering a question posed by a teacher or a friend. In both years almost all the children chose the non-ellipted form for addressing teachers and about half of each group also chose it for addressing friends. This is interesting given that in the interviews both groups of children gave a significant number of ellipted answers when talking to an adult assigned high status by the school. Clearly language judgements and actual language use are distinct abilities.

Because of the social and cognitive significance of auxiliaries it was considered of interest to test the children's ability to judge differences in meaning in different contexts. This was done in 1986. The responses were similar in that 6 children of each group interpreted 'may' in its sense of giving permission only and not as probability as well. ('The boy may play footy').

In choosing between a set of sentences 7 children in each group could tell 'must' and 'should' in the given context were near synonyms. In another sentence pair only 3 children in each group realised that 'will' is a stronger expression of intention than 'would'. Although all the children understood that 'if' introduces a hypothetical statement, only five children in each group could identify the modal 'could' as the source of the non-occurrence of the event.

Variation in style can also be judged from the point of view of hearer comfort. It was of interest to see whether the children were aware of this type of variation. In other words did they find a sentence with optional marking present easier to understand than its ellipted counterpart.

In this instance, they were presented with two complex sentences containing a noun clause introduced with or without the conjunction 'that'. ('She thought (that) he was good at sport'). Three of the NESB children thought that the non-ellipted form was easier to understand compared with that of the ESB children. This difference may well be the result of exposure of the NESB children to language impoverished with respect to grammatical and discourse marking.

Conclusion

As we have seen the NES parents participating in this study imposed an exceptionally heavy processing load on their hearers. They did this by frequently (in two-thirds of the clauses they uttered) breaking the obligatory grammatical rules of English and so foiling hearer expectations. In particular four-fifths of the faulty clauses contained deviance in the verb group. On the other hand, approx. one-fifth of the NES parents' utterances were faulty and half of these contained an impaired verb group. In the NES parents' speech other impairments for example in word order pluralisation and the use of prepositions seemed less significant than omissions and lexical confusion. What emerged quite clearly is that the repair such utterances require is frequently ambiguous and at times impossible. The obstacles the non-observance of obligatory marking create for the hearer are further aggravated by the lack of the speaker's use of optional marking.

The study reveals that in this respect the NESB parents are not as hearer oriented as the ES parents. This is evident in that the former allow less processing time by uttering fewer fillers and routines and are less informative as they use fewer connectives and modal auxiliaries.

From the above it can be concluded that the bilingual NESB children in this sample were exposed to interlanguage which imposed an exceptionally heavy processing load on them and could, at times, be understood only vaguely or not at all. It appears that under these circumstances bilingualism does not enhance language awareness, an ability associated with bilingualism according to the research literature. This statement is based on the following.

The results show that the ESB children outstripped the NESB children, or did equally well on the various linguistic awareness tests. They performed much better on one task only, namely the interpretation of impaired texts. Being prepared to guess at the meaning of not fully intelligible messages can be an asset in social situations where accommodating a conversational partner is important. In other words, here are situations where informed guessing in language comprehension is an asset, but there are others where accurate understanding is at a premium. The texts of the disciplines and hence the texts children encounter in the course of their studies often belong to the latter category. Some of the problems NESB children have at school may well be connected with this aspect of their language processing strategies.

One can also speculate that bilingualism is powerful enough to overcome the obstacles created by interlanguage to some degree. Perhaps it is significant that the NESB children's language awareness was nearly on par with the ESB children's. If this is the case under such adverse circumstances, what responsibility does the school have to develop their linguistic awareness potential? The obligations are twofold.

1. Reduce the exposure to interlanguage by supporting the NESB children's language development in the family language so that family conversations can be held in a language which matches the cognitive maturity of the parents. In order to facilitate ethnic language use in the home, children should receive formal instruction in their parents' language. If this is not possible as part of the day school curriculum, the school should take the responsibility of making appropriate arrangements.

2. Design exercises aimed at hightening NESB children's linguistic awareness. These could include word counting, the recognition of the basic sentence types such as statements, questions and imperatives, the identification of word meaning, in particular, that of the modal auxiliaries. Such practice could be given inventing various word games including riddles, a type of word play popular with primary school age children.

What must be remembered, however, is that paying attention to the form of language and teaching/learning formal grammar are distinct activities In other words, the emphasis is not on the linguistic forms but on the meanings the forms express.

APPENDIX I

Summary of Findings

Language Awareness: Correct Responses

	NESB Children	ESB Children
	%	%
Pronunciation:		
1985 letter	58	81
1985 word	52	63
Word:		
1985/86 Concept	55	80
1985 Meaning arbitrary	70	74
1985 Polysemy	63	68
Grammar:		
1985 Irregular past tense	83	100
1985 Correcting VG errors	88	88

Language Awareness: Interpretations

	NESB Children	ESB Children
	Score	Score
1986 Alternative repairs	12	14
1985 Ungrammatical sequences	18	14
1986 Congruent choices	19	34

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Offer adults enjoyable intergroup contacts.

2. Keep in place and escalate any multicultural programs in schools.

3. English and other language teaching programs should receive unquestioned priority.

4. Focus on the development of critical faculties in children.

REFERENCES

Bates, E. Language and Context. New York: Academic Press, 1976.

Ben-Zeev, S. Mechanisms by which Childhood Bilingualism Affects Understanding of Language and Cognitive Structures, in Hornby, P.A. (ed) Bilingualism. New York: Academic Press, 1977.

Bialystok, E. The Role of Linguistic Knowledge in Second Language Use. Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 4(1): 31-45, 1981.

Brown, R. and Gilman, A. The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity, in Fishman, J.A. (ed.) Readings in the Sociology of Language. The Hague: Mouton, 1968.

Brown, R. and Levinson, S. Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena, in Goody, E.N. (ed) Questions and Politeness, Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1978.

Carroll, J.B. Defining Language Comprehension: Some Speculations, in Carroll, J.B. and Friedle, R.O. (eds) Language Comprehension and the Acquisition of Knowledge, Washington, D.C.: V.H. Winston and Sons, 1972.

Chafe, W.L. Meaning and the Structure of Language. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970.

Cummins, J. and Gulutsan, M. Some Effects of Bilingualism on Cognitive Functioning, in Carey, T.S. (ed) Bilingualism, Biculturalism and Education. Edmonton: The University of Alberta, 1974.

Dulay, H., Burt, M. and Krashen, S. Language Two. New York: O.U.P., 1982.

Ervin-Tripp, S. 'Is Sybil There?', The Structure of American English Directives, Language in Society, 5(1): 25-66, 1976.

Fromkin, V. and Rodman, R. An Introduction to Language, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Second ed., 1978.

Goffman, E. Where the Action Is. London: Allen Lane, the Penguin Press, 1969.

Grice, H.P., Logic and Conversation, in Cole, P. and Morgan, J.L. (eds) Syntax and Semantics. New York: Academic Press, 1975.

Grieve, R., Tunmer, W. and Pratt, C. An Introduction to the Study of Language Awareness in Children. Education Research and Perspectives, 7(1): 5-19. 1980.

Leech, G.N. Principles of Pragmatics. London: Longman, 1983.

Leech, G. and Svartvik, J. A Communicative Grammar of English. London: Longman, 1975.

Lyons, J. Semantics, Vol.2, Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1974.

Morgan, J.L. Sentence Fragments and the Notion 'Sentence', in Kachru, B.B. et al. (eds) Issues in Linguistics. Papers in Honor of Henry and Renee Kahane. Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1973.

Quirk, R. and Greenbaum, S. A University Grammar of English. London: Longman, 1973.

Rado, M. and Foster, L. The Language of Migrant Parents and their Children: An Interlanguage Perspective. Paper presented at the Australian Association of Speech and Hearing Annual Conference, Melbourne, 1985a.

Rado, M. and Foster, L. Text Building Devices in Intercultural Conversations. Paper presented at the Australian Universities Language and Literature Association 23rd Congress, Melbourne, 1985b.

Rado, M. and Foster, L. The Language Environment of Children with a Non-English Speaking Background. Paper presented at Ethnicity and Multiculturalism National Research Conference, Melbourne, 1986a.

Rado, M. and Foster, L. Family Language Use as a Data Base for Implementing Language Education Policies. Paper presented at the Second Australian Family Research Conference, Melbourne, 1986b.

Rado, M. and Foster, L. Migrant Children's Language, Parental and Peer Language Environments and their Implications in the Australian Intercultural Context. ARAL, 9(1): 62-91, 1986c.

Rado, M. and Foster, L. The Language of Migrant Parents, their Children and Anglo-Celtic Peers: An Interlanguage Perspective. Working Papers on Migrant and intercultural Studies, No.4. Monash University, 1986d.

Shatz, M. and Gelman, R. The Development of Communication Skills: Modification in the Speech of Young Children as a Function of Listeners. Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 38, 1973, Serial No. 152.

Shopen, T. Ellipsis as Grammatical Indeterminacy. Foundation of Language 10: 65-77, 1973.

Slobin, D.I. A Case Study of Early Language Awareness, in Sinclair, A. et al., (eds) The Child's Conception of Language. Berlin: Springer 1978.

Tunmer, W.E. and Bowey, J.A. The Role of Linguistic Awareness in a Theory of Reading Acquisition. Education Research and Perspectives, 7(1): 80-101, 1980.

Yu, A. and Bain, B. Language, Social Class and Cognitive Style: A Comprehensive Study of Unilingual and Bilingual Education in Hong Kong and Alberta. Education and Research Studies No.1, Hong Kong Teachers' Association, 1985.